



faith PATH

WORSHIP

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*teaching your child to give
thanks and praise to god*

“He who sings, prays twice.”

St. Augustine of Hippo

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Worship is our response to the greatness of God. Worship is giving thanks and praise to God for who he is and what he has done for us. Worship is what we were created to do. It is an end in itself, and it is what we will be doing for all eternity in heaven. And God has blessed us with the opportunity to create a microcosm of heaven here on earth as we gather together in church to worship him each week. This “heavenly microcosm” is created powerfully through music, architecture, prayer, and sacrament. These things give us a sense of transcendence and reverence when we come to church, which we seldom get elsewhere in our lives.

TEACHING YOUR CHILD HOW TO WORSHIP GOD

Worship is both an action and an attitude. Worship involves taking the focus off of ourselves and directing our attention, our praise and our adoration, toward God. We may be great multi-taskers who can accomplish multiple things at once, but real worship only occurs when we give God our complete and sole attention. As a matter of fact, children don't need to be taught *how* to worship, but *whom* to worship. Most kids idolize heroes from the world of sports, music and television. In other words, they “worship” in the purest form by focusing their complete attention on someone they admire rather than on themselves.

CREATING A WORSHIPFUL EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR FAMILY

A four-year-old will have an innate sense of reverence and transcendence from the first moment he or she walks into church. Here are some ideas about how to cultivate that innate sense of God's presence:

- Allow yourself a few extra minutes to park, drop off younger siblings in the nursery, and find your pew so that you're not rushing into the service.
- Remind your kids to use the bathroom before the service begins.
- Quiet your own heart as you enter the church. Your child will “pick up” this attitude of worship from the emotional tenor you display.

- Move slowly and speak in a whisper.
- Point out the beauty of the windows and the icons to your child. Explain what is depicted there.
- Turn off your phone, and don't allow any screen time in church.
- Encourage your child to come forward for the children's sermon. This will give them a sense of importance, and help them understand that the service is for them too, not just for adults.

There are appropriate ways children's energy can be diverted during the service, such as:

- Coloring the picture of the Bible story, which can be found on the table just outside the entrance to the church. Crayons are provided there as well.
- Picking out letters and words from the bulletin, hymnal, or screens.
- Letting them scribble on the prayer cards.

Remember, it is ok to let your kids wiggle. Don't let the church service become a time of constant "shushing" and discipline. As long as they're not distracting others, it is ok for kids to move and wiggle and burn a little of that relentless energy during the service. It always bothers the parents more than it bothers other churchgoers. Also, it's ok for kids to be bored in church. Our job as parents is not to entertain our children, but to give them what they need. Kids need church, because kids need Jesus Christ. It is ok, even morally necessary, for you to let your child be bored.

OTHER IDEAS FOR MAXIMIZING THE IMPACT OF SUNDAY WORSHIP:

- Make worshiping as a family a priority by going to church each week. These are the most developmentally significant years of your child's life, and taking them to church weekly will have a deeply formative effect for the rest of their lives. The consistency will also help your child have the practice they need to do well in the service.
- Pay special attention to the music in church. If a particular hymn or song hits home to you, write it down or take the bulletin home. Then you can look it up online (YouTube, iTunes, etc.) and teach it to your children. Do not underestimate the power of music in faith formation—it's huge!

INTENTIONAL FAITHPATH PLAN

CHILD'S NAME _____

How will you be intentional this next year?

- Pray daily for and with my child.
- Schedule and have regular family times.
- Create a habit of weekly worship with my child.
- _____

The next step on the FaithPath is *Learning our Liturgy*, recommended at age five. You will receive an email during the month of your child's birthday, and the resource will be available for you with your child's name on it at the Bringing Faith Home Center, right outside the Incarnation Bookstore.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *Teaching Kids Authentic Worship* by Kathleen Chapman is a good resource that comes from an evangelical perspective.
- *Parenting in the Pew: Guiding Your Children into the Joy of Worship*, by Robbie F. Castleman

INCARNATION'S CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY

Bringing Faith Home: incarnation.org/bringing-faith-home
Children & Family Ministry: incarnation.org/grow/children